

## Dealing with Sewer

### Back-ups

According to the Center for Disease Control at the website below, the following safety measures will help reduce the risk of your family and pets contracting diseases associated with sewage contaminated flood waters:

- Avoid direct contact with flood or back-up water when possible. Children and pets should not play in or come in contact with flood water.
- When cleaning up flooded areas, wear protective clothing and gear, such as latex gloves, safety glasses and waterproof, impenetrable rubber boots to prevent exposure to sewage.
- Use a disinfectant solution of laundry bleach (5.25% hypochlorite) for cleanup. You can make this disinfectant solution by mixing 3/4 cup laundry bleach, such as Clorox, with one gallon water.
- <http://emergency.cdc.gov/disasters/floods/cleanupwater.asp>



## After Clean-up Procedures

After cleaning up, make sure to do the following before removing protective latex gloves:

- Sanitize or dispose of aprons and other clothing worn during the clean-up.
- Disinfect rubber footwear in a bucket using the bleach solution described in the previous section.
- Disinfect buckets and other such materials used in the clean-up, before storing them.
- Remove latex gloves from the inside-out and wash hands for at least two minutes with warm water and a disinfectant soap to assure all skin surfaces are clean of contaminants.
- Place disposables in a sealed plastic bag for garbage collection.

Some homeowner's insurance covers a sewer back-up. Call your insurer to see if you are covered or if you can add coverage.

For more information contact:

Chicopee Water Pollution Control

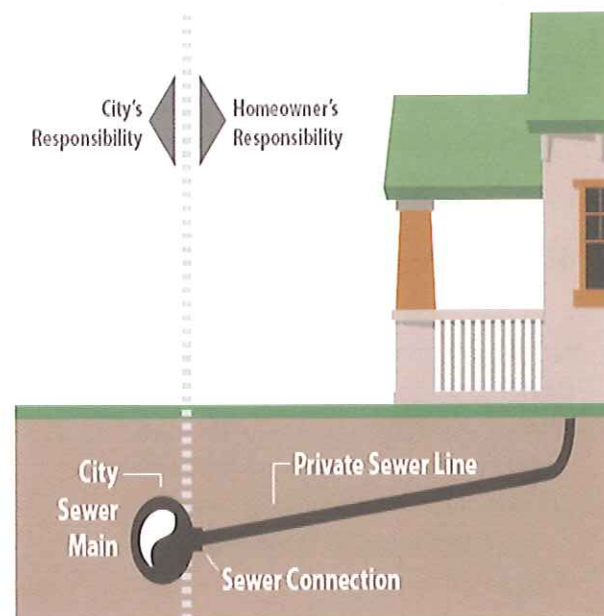
80 Medina Street

Chicopee, MA 01013

(413)-594-3585

<http://www.chicopeema.gov>

# Preventing and Dealing with Sewer Back-ups



# **Sewer Back-ups & You**

## **What is a Building Sewer?**

The pipe connecting your residence or building to the City sewer is called the building sewer/drain. This connection is owned by the building owner. It is the owners responsibility to install, repair, unblock and maintain this pipe for its entire length from the building to the connection of the City sewer system.

## **Public Health Code**

In 1997, the Chicopee Board of Health passed a regulation stating that new, remodeled, or renovated buildings which are connected to the city sewer and have any type of plumbing fixture in the basement or below the manhole cover in the street must have some sort of approved back flow prevention device. This is for the protection of the residence and the backflow device should be installed according to the Massachusetts Plumbing Code.

## **How to Prevent a Sewer Back-up**

Installation of shut off valves and back flow devices, while not 100% effective, greatly reduce the likelihood of a sewer back-up. It is recommended that residents who are connected to a combined sewer/storm system install these devices.

## **Who to Call**

If you experience a sewer back-up between 7 AM and 3:30 PM on weekdays, call the Water Pollution Control Facility at (413)-594-3585; after hours call the Police Department at (413)-594-1700. A DPW emergency worker will respond to determine the cause of the problem.

## **What to Expect**

The City will not enter your house after regular business hours.

.During regular business hours the City will attempt to drain your sewer line at no cost.

If the City cannot open your sewer during a scheduled house call, you may need to call a plumber.

The City will attempt to do a camera inspection of your connection and provide an inspection report, so you can make an informed repair decision..

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The City will not move personal items and appliances to gain access to your sewer connection.

The City will not force open a stuck cap on the sewer cleanout.. Homeowners need to check the cap can be easily removed.

The City does not cut roots, remove grease and debris or otherwise repair/replace sewer connections.

## **What Causes a Sewer Back-up?**

Sewers can back up for any number of reasons. Chicopee's sewer system is about 70% combined, meaning that stormwater and sewage flow through the same pipe. On a typical dry weather day, wastewater from our homes, schools and businesses flows through Chicopee's public sewers without any problems.

During wet weather, the combined amount of rain water and wastewater is more than the pipes can handle, so the combined flow begins to backup.

Many times the cause of a sewer back-up is from items that are not meant to be in the sewer system. These items include roots from trees and shrubs planted near the sewer, paper products other than toilet paper, cooking oil and grease, toys, diapers, yard drains, needles and other medical waste.

## **What is the City Doing?**

The City is spending millions of dollars annually to lessen these sewer problems, but it will be many years before the entire City has new or rehabilitated sewers.

The City is actively replacing combined sewer/storm pipes with two separate pipes city wide. This is a \$150 million project that is expected to be completed in about 25 years.